



**GROUND TRUTH  
SOLUTIONS**

MIXED MIGRATION PLATFORM

# **PERCEPTIONS OF REFUGEES**

NORTHERN IRAQ

— FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION REPORT —

OCTOBER 25, 2017

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# INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the findings of six focus group discussions conducted with Syrian refugees at four different sites in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. The discussions took place in the Domiz and Kawergosk camps and in the cities of Dohuk and Erbil, the region's capital. The overwhelming majority (97%) of registered Syrian refugees in Iraq live in Iraqi Kurdistan; of these 244,235 people, roughly half live in Erbil and a quarter in Dohuk, which are the areas focused on in this report.<sup>1</sup>

This is part of a series of data collection rounds looking at refugee perceptions of humanitarian assistance in this region of northern Iraq, under the [Mixed Migration Platform](#) (MMP). The discussion topics were designed by Ground Truth Solutions based on the findings of perceptual quantitative [surveys](#) conducted at the same sites in March 2017, as well as [focus group discussions](#) held in May-June 2017. The aim is to delve deeper into the issues that surfaced in the survey, using open-ended questions. More background information about the methodology can be found at the end of this report.



Map of camps and urban areas covered in northern Iraq

## READING THIS REPORT

This report presents key findings from the focus group discussions with the main conclusions drawn from each discussion topic. Where relevant, we also include bar charts for several questions from the first round of quantitative data collection conducted in March 2017 with responses quantified on a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

The charts show the distribution (in %) of answer options chosen for each question – with colours ranging from dark red for negative answers to dark green for positive ones. The mean or average score is shown on a scale of 1 to 5.

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

Syrian refugees face severe problems in fulfilling their basic needs in both camps and urban areas. Food, water, medical care, education, tents, gas and electricity are most frequently cited as unmet needs. Although services and commodities are available to those living in cities, they are often too costly. Syrian refugees living in Dohuk explained that healthcare, education, water, and electricity were available, but had to be paid for. Those living in private accommodation in both Dohuk and Erbil responded more negatively than those living in camps and reported that they are less likely to receive aid and services.

There is a serious lack of funding for providing essential services in this region, as evidenced by a US\$435 million shortfall for humanitarian projects in Iraq according to an OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin from September 2017.<sup>2</sup> This shortfall has led to nearly half of all OCHA 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) projects either not starting or closing, with education and food security being hit especially hard.<sup>3</sup> In addition to a lack of funding, issues of bribery, corruption, and favouritism were mentioned in the focus group discussions as factors hindering aid distribution, employment opportunities, access to information, and complaints mechanisms.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, 3RP Regional refugee & resilience plan 2017-2018 in response to the Syria crisis, Iraq: Syrian Refugee stats and locations (Erbil, Iraq; UNHCR, 31 August 2017), 1.

<sup>2</sup> OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Iraq, (Iraq: OCHA, 15 September 2017), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

# GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for local actors and authorities based on findings from the focus group discussions:

- ✓ Increase transparency of criteria to qualify for aid distributions;
- ✓ Create mechanisms to allow refugees to participate in the decision-making process;
- ✓ Ensure better access to information, particularly about employment, travel, and the work of different aid organisations;
- ✓ Integrate feedback into the prioritisation and distribution of services;
- ✓ Ensure oversight of the distribution process to ensure fairness, and that items do not go missing;
- ✓ If suggestions or complaints are made, try to address the issues and close the loop.

More detailed suggestions and recommendations made by participants to improve current circumstances are summarised at the end of the report.

## OVERALL CONCERNS



### PROVISION OF SERVICES

Although many participants said they received support upon arrival in the camps, it has now either been significantly reduced or stopped altogether. One female refugee in Dohuk explained that while refugees living there used to receive US\$33 a month, they now receive only US\$10 or US\$11 every few months. Many participants said their needs have not been covered for years. Those living in Erbil said that their needs have not been met for up to four years, and those living in Domiz and Kawergosk camp said it has been nearly two years since they last felt they were sufficiently provided for.

“There has been no improvement from six months until now because our main problem is corruption. Once when they distributed meat for the refugees, the staff took 75% of it.” (Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)

#### Are your most important needs met by the services you receive?<sup>4</sup>

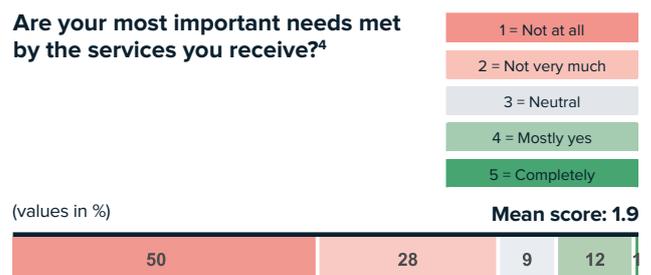


Figure 1: Services

These perceptions are supported by quantitative data collected in March 2017, which indicated that 78% of respondents do not feel that their most important needs are being met (Figure 1).



### FOOD

The decrease in quality and frequency of food distribution was brought up in all discussions. Participants mentioned that some items routinely go missing from the food baskets, the number of food coupons have been reduced, and that there are distribution delays in the camps. There are insufficient supplies of basic food items such as flour, oil, and vegetables. There were repeated requests for an increase in food distribution, including essentials such as baby milk, flour, and fresh vegetables.

“Food baskets or coupons and vouchers used to be given to everyone, but currently they give to half of the population only.” (Male refugee, Domiz camp)

OCHA’s Humanitarian Bulletin indicates that food security projects have been the worst hit by shortfalls in funding, with 81% of projects closed or never started.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This question was asked to 339 respondents of the quantitative survey conducted in March 2017. For more information, see Ground Truth Solutions and Mixed Migration Platform “Refugee Perceptions in Northern Iraq” (Ground Truth Solutions, April 2017), 6.

<sup>5</sup> OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Iraq, (Iraq: OCHA, 15 September 2017), 4 .





## HEALTHCARE

Inadequate healthcare and insufficient medical supplies at dispensaries were mentioned repeatedly, with participants particularly concerned about the health of children, the elderly, and persons living with disabilities. A common frustration was being sent to the dispensary only to find that the required medicine was unavailable, and then being instructed to go to the pharmacy and purchase the medication themselves.

“There are many doctors among the refugees but they don't help us and they take more money. The dispensaries are not sufficient or well-supported.” (Male refugee, Erbil)

“In the end, they don't feel your pain. One of my friends had a daughter and she passed away in the clinic. She was tired so we took her to the hospital and they gave her an injection, after which she died.” (Male refugee, Domiz camp)

A female refugee from Kawergosk camp also pointed to the high price of medical care, explaining that “[t]he doctors here are traders; they take a lot of money just for consultation.” Those living in Dohuk mentioned that healthcare was available to them but that they have to pay, as they do not live in a camp.

“Even the doctors don't check us well. When we ask them for an examination for our children, we are afraid for our children's health. The doctors just give us a prescription without checking what is the case.” (Male refugee, Domiz camp)



## EDUCATION

Participants expressed concern about the quality of education available, and the absence of a structured and consistent education system. Education was also a concern among respondents in the quantitative surveys conducted in May-June 2017, when parents explained that their children have to work instead of attending school.<sup>6</sup> This issue was not mentioned in the most recent focus group discussions as a barrier to education. However, the increasing use of Kurdish over Arabic in schools was said by parents to be hindering their children's educational development. While the Iraqi constitution stipulates that Arabic and Kurdish are the two official languages of Iraq, it also decrees that constitutionally people have the right to be educated in either of these two languages.<sup>7</sup>

“They changed the language at schools from Arabic to Sorani (Kurdish) and our children are having trouble learning a new language. We hope that they will teach Arabic and English instead of Sorani at schools. In the end, we hope that they will meet our needs.” (Female refugee, Domiz camp)

The UNICEF Situation Report published in August 2017 highlighted the provision of non-formal education for Syrian refugees and called for a more formal and structured approach in providing education to refugees in Iraq. The report gave details of a UNICEF workshop with the Iraqi Ministry of Education (MoE), resulting in the “recommendation to support the MoE in developing a unified policy for education of refugees.”<sup>8</sup>

“There is no decent education. My daughter is in third grade and cannot differentiate between letters. There is a teacher who does not even come to school but gets a salary.” (Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)

<sup>6</sup> Ground Truth Solutions and Mixed Migration Platform, Summary of Focus Group Discussions in Northern Iraq (Ground Truth Solutions, July 2017)

<sup>7</sup> “Full Text of Iraqi Constitution.” The Washington Post, WP Company, 12 Oct. 2005.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, Syria Crisis August 2017 Humanitarian Results Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt, UNHCR (Amman: August 2017), 11.





## EMPLOYMENT

Participants spoke about the difficulty of finding work in the local economy, a concern echoed in the quantitative surveys conducted in March 2017 (Figure 2), where only 8% of respondents felt that refugee families were able to make a living in the local economy.

**Are refugee families able to make a living by working in the local economy?<sup>9</sup>**

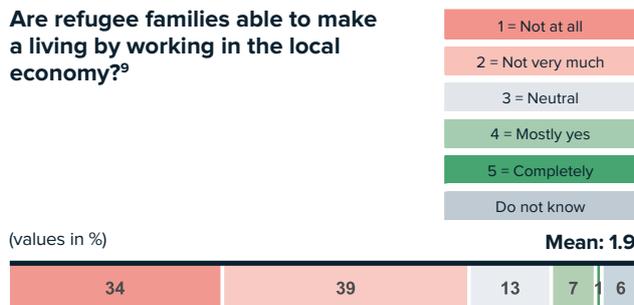


Figure 2: Employment

“Job opportunities are very few - they exploit the worker and give him a minimum wage.” (Male refugee, Erbil)

Several refugees said that when jobs become available they are often filled by those who pay bribes or have connections. Refugees identified employment as one of their main unmet needs, with both men and women expressing a strong desire to work. Having a means of income is particularly important to participants given the largely inadequate provision of essential aid such as food, shelter, healthcare, gas, and electricity, which they often have to pay for themselves.

“I work in the education sector and a university advertised an open position. Someone I know who had a 97% grade average was rejected for the position, while the university accepted more than one person with much lower school grade averages, like 63%. What kind of horrible nonsense is that? Why the discrimination? I don’t understand it.” (Male refugee, Dohuk)

Female refugees find it easier to get jobs than men, participants explained, with women typically working in places like malls and markets. It was noted in all cases, however, that they are also more likely to be exploited, with one example given by a female refugee in Kawergosk camp of female agricultural workers being paid so little that they cannot even buy breakfast with their wages.

“It is easier for women to find jobs than for men, especially if she has good English and is educated. However, [employers are] more likely to exploit women than men.” (Male refugee, Erbil)

“Women can find jobs more often than men because most of them work in malls and whatnot, therefore, they have more opportunities.” (Male refugee, Dohuk)

Several participants also mentioned that Iraqi nationals are given priority, with one male refugee from Kawergosk camp stating that “[t]he citizens of Iraq have no jobs. How can we find jobs?” Participants in Erbil also said that relevant qualification certificates (which are in Syria) are often required to apply for jobs in Iraq.

Even those who manage to find jobs (often the educated, women and those living outside of the camps) are said to face exploitation as they work long hours.

“Moreover, they exploit and don’t provide a suitable salary to girls working in the mall or in another market. There are job opportunities, but are they going to continue working for smaller salaries each month? They should have encouragement and increased salaries.” (Male refugee, Dohuk)

“We don’t know who to complain to about the work corruption and exploitation. We do not have rights because we do not have residency here.” (Male refugee, Domiz camp)

Further barriers to employment remain, such as language, transport issues, age, and refugee discrimination within municipalities. Female refugees from Kawergosk camp suggested that organisations provide refugees with transportation to cities such as Erbil where there are better job opportunities.

“There are many companies that we could work at in Erbil, if aid organisations could provide us with vehicles to reach Erbil. We can’t afford transportation.” (Female refugee, Kawergosk camp)

<sup>9</sup>This question was asked to 339 respondents of the quantitative survey conducted in March 2017. For more information, see Ground Truth Solutions and Mixed Migration Platform “Refugee Perceptions in Northern Iraq” (Ground Truth Solutions, April 2017), 10.





## SHELTER

Most participants living in camps expressed their dissatisfaction with the size and quality of their tents. They described cramped living conditions with little, if any privacy. Many requested that they be given better tents to withstand the weather conditions.

“There is no privacy in the camps. I have sons who are 17, 18, and 20 years old. They are young men. And my daughter is a young girl...we all sleep in one tent without any privacy. We are Muslims with our own customs and norms, which does not allow such things.” (Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)

“The tents are not going to last this winter. The last winter we held the wood pillars to make the tent stay still [against the wind]. This winter I do not think the tent will last.”  
(Female refugee, Kawergosk camp)

“Our biggest fear is the winter because it’s going to be so cold and windy and our tents are weak.”  
(Female refugee, Domiz camp)

“...the tents are also supposed to be replaced. And they are very expensive, we cannot afford them.”  
(Female refugee, Kawergosk)



## WATER AND SANITATION

Poor sanitation and waste disposal was an issue raised by many participants, who complained that their children have become sick as a result. Health problems also stemmed from substandard sewage systems in the camps, according to the refugees.

“They want to bring us vaccines for cholera but they should have repaired the sewage first...if they simply fixed the sewage, they would have eliminated cholera.”  
(Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)

“The camp is full of dirt and they don’t clean it which is bad for our children’s health because it could lead to diseases. They have to spray insecticide, remove the trash, and clean the dirty water by fixing the sewage system.”  
(Female refugee, Dohuk)

Frequent water shortages in the camps were mentioned several times, with little to no improvement in the levels of access. Male refugees from Kawergosk camp said that they are sometimes forced to go days without access to water supplies. Just over 20% of HRP projects for water, sanitation, and hygiene are nearly or fully funded, according to OCHA’s Humanitarian Bulletin, highlighting a larger problem in providing WASH services to refugees in Iraq.<sup>10</sup>

“The water is not available all the time; sometimes we go nine days without water. Some people who have money buy water; others do not have any income. The situation has become worse and worse. It is the worst it has been for four years.” (Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)



## GAS AND ELECTRICITY

A number of participants indicated that electricity is often only available to those who are able to pay a monthly subscription, which in many cases arbitrarily increases without warning.

“We don’t have water or electricity. We only have water at night. We pay 25,000 Iraqi dinars a month [around 18 euros] for electricity, although we don’t receive electricity all the time.” (Male refugee, Domiz camp)

Gas supplies are also insufficient, according to discussion participants, making cooking difficult. The lack of

electricity and gas, as well as proper cooking facilities means that participants are often forced to cook over an open fire, which presents a safety hazard, as tents are extremely flammable.

“If a fire in one tent happens it will immediately burn the other tents.” (Female refugee, Kawergosk camp)

Those living in cities have access to water, gas and electricity, but also mention having to pay for these commodities, believing that those in camps receive them at no cost.

<sup>10</sup> OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Iraq, (Iraq: OCHA, 15 September 2017), 4.



“Other services like water and electricity are also available. However, the water and electricity are paid – we have to pay for them because we are not living within the camps – we live outside them. These services are mostly available for camps, like health and other services are only available for camps and not for people outside of them.” (Male refugee, Dohuk camp)



## POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Concerns about ISIS regaining control was at the top of participants’ list of worries for the coming year. The huge increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq was also mentioned as a cause for concern amongst participants, who worry that the services and aid to refugees will be redirected to Iraqi IDPs. A male refugee in Erbil stated that his main concern for the coming year was “[t]hat they [aid providers and local

government] take care of the Iraqi IDPs more than Syrian refugees.”

“When we first came in 2013 the situation was good and we were receiving help; after the terrorists, ISIS entered Iraq the situation got worse. We are afraid because Iraqi citizens are suffering, so what will happen to us?”  
(Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)

## FAIRNESS OF SERVICE PROVISION



## CORRUPTION, BRIBERY & FAVOURITISM

Service provision is overwhelmingly seen as unfair by those living in Erbil and Dohuk, as favouritism and connections were cited as factors which determine access to services, rather than need. Only one person in Erbil felt that there was no favouritism in the provision of services. Those living in camps were more mixed in their attitudes, and while not all felt that there was discrimination, everyone interviewed agreed that service provision is insufficient and often does not correlate to the size or need of a family.

“Our neighbour has 11 children and he only received \$200, another family of only 2 people receive \$400.”  
(Male refugee, Dohuk)

“They wouldn’t distribute services equally. They promised us to distribute services but we received nothing. Furthermore, the services are not provided fairly at all in that they distribute food baskets and cleaning products to very few refugees.”  
(Female refugee, Domiz camp)

Quantitative data from May-June 2017 (Figure 3) reflects mixed attitudes regarding fair and non-discriminatory access to services. Respondents who saw it as unfair were the largest percentage, pointing to the need for monitoring and transparency around service distribution.

“Favouritism plays a big role in receiving aid, health services, all the domains – some people have nothing, they never received anything, other people do not need aid but they get it through connections.” (Male refugee, Erbil)

The majority of participants from the focus group discussions conducted in March 2017 also highlighted the prevalence of favouritism and discrimination in aid distributions.

**Are the other services available [in this camp/urban location] provided fairly and without discrimination?<sup>11</sup>**

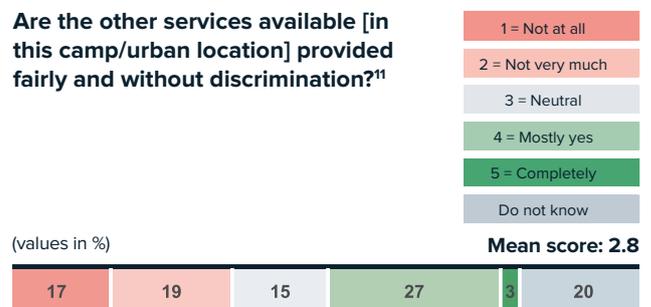


Figure 3: Fairness

Corruption, bribery, and favouritism were identified by refugees living in camps and cities in northern Iraq as barriers to services being provided fairly and without discrimination. The problem of needing “*wasta*”<sup>12</sup> (واسطة) came up in every single discussion – *wasta* does not have a direct English translation but is similar to the English phrase “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know,” meaning contacts and connections are essential to success in all spheres of life.

<sup>11</sup> This question was asked to 339 respondents of the quantitative survey conducted in March 2017. For more information, see Ground Truth Solutions and Mixed Migration Platform “Refugee Perceptions in Northern Iraq” (Ground Truth Solutions, April 2017), 10.

<sup>12</sup> “Wasta: Vitamin W”, accessed September 19, 2017, Al-Bab, www.al-bab.com/society-politics/wasta





## LACK OF MONITORING & TRANSPARENCY

Participants suggested aid agencies should come to see the situation in the camps for themselves. There is the perception that the organisations' work is outside of the camps, with tasks such as conducting surveys taking precedence over distributing aid and monitoring the processes and people who do so.

"We want the organisation to come and see for itself. We want more than just words. The aid they provide is going to some people but not to all of them."

(Female refugee, Kawergosk camp)

"Sadly enough, the organisations' work is not to help people, but rather get more employees and conduct assessments and surveys, then never provide anything to anyone. The services and assistance they all provide are deteriorating."

(Male refugee, Dohuk)

While the perception that discrimination and favouritism are the product of a lack of monitoring by organisations, there is also a strong sense that agencies are unconcerned with monitoring staff appointed to ensure services are distributed fairly.

"I think it the NGO's fault. There is no monitoring...I know many families were accepted to go to Canada. They were interviewed and examined. Then their names were cancelled. Only the rich people here went to Canada. There are no poor families with disabled members who have gone there. The NGO is not even monitoring the goods; my children bought chips that expired six months ago. The bread in the camp is worth 500 dinars while people buy it with 1,000 dinars." (Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION, COMPLAINTS MECHANISMS & VOICE



### ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT GETTING HELP FROM LOCAL AGENCIES OR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Participants generally do not have the information they need to get help from relief agencies or local authorities. This problem is attributed to corruption, and the tendency for camp management to favour their immediate family and friends in sharing information about the services available to refugees.

"The employees tell their families only and we do not know anything. We did not know anything six months ago, and we still do not know anything [we do not know what we are entitled to or not] and have not received anything"

(Female refugee, Kawergosk camp)



### ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT MOVING INSIDE OR OUTSIDE OF IRAQ

According to refugees taking part in the discussions, they have little information about their options for moving between countries or within Iraq. As many of them do not have passports or proper residency permits, they cannot leave Iraqi Kurdistan, with some describing their position as being similar to that of prisoners. Information about how to leave Iraq is said to be attained only through connections or paying bribes.

"We are living in a prison not a camp. If we stayed in Syria, it would have been better." (Male refugee, Kawergosk)

"I heard something today about organisations getting money from people to register their names in the lists of people to interview in order to go abroad."

(Male refugee, Domiz camp)

"I have been here for five years – six members of my family died (including my mother and father) and I could not go home to attend their funerals. They [camp management] let many people in the camp travel to Syria. Some people spend a month here and a month in Syria. They never allowed me to go to Syria even once. Why? Why? I was not able to bury my mother, or my father, or my uncle or my niece. Why? Why?" (Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)





## MAKING SUGGESTIONS & COMPLAINTS

Even though most participants are aware of how to make suggestions and complaints, they have no hope of getting a response, are fearful of making one in the first place, or say it is very challenging. Most feel getting a response is the real issue, and that their opinions and complaints are not valued or taken into account because they are refugees.

“I do not even know where to complain; when I go to an organisation’s headquarters, each employee says go to the other one.” (Female refugee, Erbil)

“Of course, we know how to make suggestions or complaints, but the problem is that they don’t consider taking any suggestions or complaints. They always ignore us. They look down on us just because we are Syrians. They always just say next month, next month, next month. But we never see any responses, it’s all talk and lies.”  
(Female refugee, Domiz camp)

Fears over the repercussions of making a complaint were mentioned as a barrier, with one male refugee in Kawergosk camp pointing out that: “There are cameras above the complaint box. How can we complain?”



## VOICE

All participants felt that their views were not taken into account when organisations made decisions about the support that they receive, or were unaware of the processes, so did not feel informed enough to know if their opinions were considered. There is a willingness and desire to be involved in the decision-making process, and the female refugees who participated in the discussion at Al Salamiyah camp offered to give their opinions again in the future. This highlights the importance of keeping participants informed about the developments and subsequent actions taken, following their suggestions and input in order to foster a sense of accountability.

“No one hears us or replies to us.” (Male refugee, Dohuk)

The issue of integrating refugee voices into the decision-making was also an area that was highlighted as a

concern in the quantitative data survey in March 2017, with only 14% feeling that their views were taken into account (Figure 4). It seems that there is still a general lack of communication surrounding decision-making on the part of organisations.

**Do you feel your views are taken into account in decisions made about the support you receive?<sup>13</sup>**



Figure 4: Voice

## RESPECT

Overall, participants were most positive about their interactions with security forces and government authorities, and many expressed gratitude for their security and protection; this was seen as one of the only benefits of living in the camp. Attitudes towards aid providers were mixed; many felt respected, while one felt that “they treat us in a cold way, like when you ask them about something they say ‘It’s not my job’ or ‘It’s not my problem’” (Female refugee, Erbil). A female participant from Domiz camp also explained that she does not feel respected in Iraq because she is Syrian. Several participants said that they do not interact with aid workers

so they cannot comment on their level of respect, or that this was not the issue and what mattered was their inability to provide the necessary aid.

“...the issue is not respect, but the lack of their capabilities.”  
(Male refugee, Dohuk)

“To be honest, we have been treated very respectfully - they protect us.” (Female refugee, Domiz camp)

<sup>13</sup> This question was asked to 339 respondents of the quantitative survey conducted in March 2017. For more information, see Ground Truth Solutions and Mixed Migration Platform “Refugee Perceptions in Northern Iraq” (Ground Truth Solutions, April 2017), 17.



Almost all participants said that they feel respected by aid workers, government authorities, and security forces in the surveys conducted in March 2017 (Figure 5). This suggests that while levels of respect from security and government authorities remain high, there has been a recent decrease in the level of respect and contact with aid workers. Others say that while there is respect, aid workers do not have the capacity to fulfil their role in providing and distributing aid.

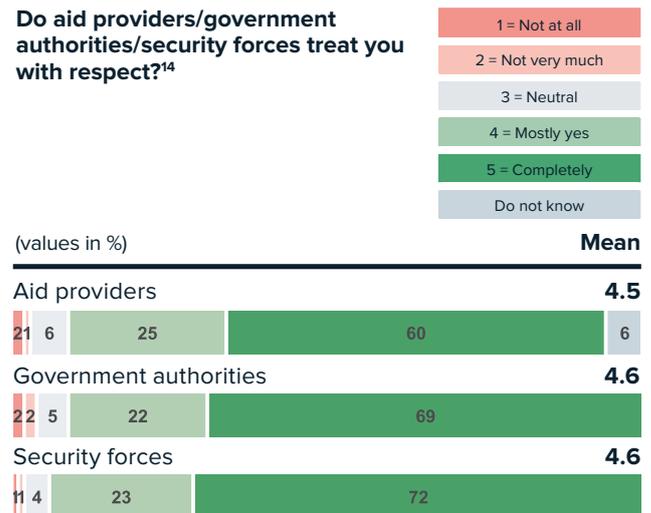


Figure 5: Respect

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS



### INCREASE TRANSPARENCY & REPLACE *MUKHTARS* WITH NGO PRESENCE ON THE GROUND

Participants offered advice on how aid agencies can improve the situation and provide aid and services in a more transparent and fair manner. They suggested that international aid agencies take a more active role in supervising the aid distribution process. Issues of corruption and discrimination were attributed to the laissez-faire approach that agencies take, often appointing *mukhtars* (heads of the community) to oversee the day-to-day running of humanitarian operations in the camps, with little oversight.

The danger of appointing *mukhtars* to run the camps is particularly evident in Kawergosk camp, where participants indicated a high level of corruption and fear. Participants were afraid that those in charge would find out that they had taken part in the discussions and reiterated the necessity for confidentiality, as one male refugee said at the end of the discussion: “Please do not reveal our names, we fear for our children.”

The discussions pointed to a lack of oversight from organisations in Kawergosk camp. One participant explained that organisational staff are unresponsive to their complaints about the lack of aid: “I am complaining about it to organisations but nobody cares, I complain to the UN and they say tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. It’s all talk, talk, talk. They took the complaint papers and threw them away immediately.”

“Four people are responsible for the camp. We never elected them. We do not want them to stay in charge of the camp because they are corrupt...we are really afraid to talk right now. If these four knew we were claiming our rights, they would hurt us. It is not different from the oppression we suffered in Syria. Our fear of them is equivalent to what our fear was of Bashar Al Assad, the oppression has followed us here. The oppression here is worse, worse than that in Syria.” (Male refugee, Kawergosk camp)

<sup>14</sup> These were asked as three separate questions to 339 respondents of the quantitative survey conducted in March 2017. For more information, see Ground Truth Solutions and Mixed Migration Platform “Refugee Perceptions in Northern Iraq” (Ground Truth Solutions, April 2017), 14-15.





## PROVIDE JOBS

A number of refugees suggested that organisations could help refugee communities find jobs through vocational training workshops, opening new businesses, and by providing transportation from the camp to nearby cities where there are more jobs. When asked what aid agencies or authorities could do to help people find decent jobs, a male refugee from Erbil responded that they could be “developing the refugees’ abilities – providing computer and languages courses.”

Respondents repeatedly complained that agencies employ staff from outside of the camps, despite there being many educated and skilled people within the camp who have a better understanding of the needs of the population living there.

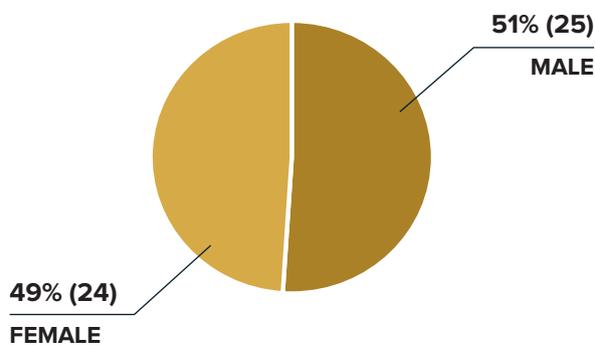
“Most of the employees here are not Syrian refugees; we have many educated people in the camp. If we got jobs, we would not want the aid. All the job opportunities are for those outside of the camp. We see them come in their cars, how is this fair? Is this not unjust? We have nothing, not even food.” (Female refugee, Kawergosk camp)

## DEMOGRAPHICS

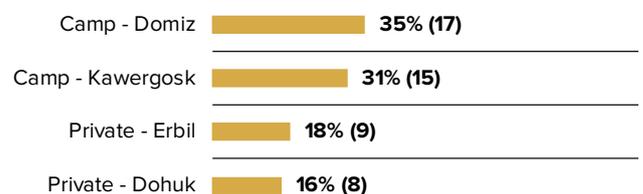
### Focus group discussion participants

The graphs below depict the demographic breakdown of the 49 refugees participating in the focus group discussions conducted in August 2017. Each graph includes percentages, as well as the frequency in parentheses.

#### Gender



#### Housing and location



### Survey respondents

More information about the quantitative data, including demographics, featured in this report can be found in the [full survey report](#) conducted with 339 refugees in March 2017.



# NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

## Background

Ground Truth Solutions is one of seven partners that jointly provide analytical services as part of the [Mixed Migration Platform](#) (MMP). The other partners are [ACAPS](#), [Danish Refugee Council](#), [Internews](#), [INTERSOS](#), [REACH](#), and [Translators without Borders](#). The goal of MMP, which was launched in October 2016, is to provide information related to mixed migration for policy, programming, and advocacy work as well as providing information to people on the move in the Middle East and Europe. Ground Truth Solutions' contribution to the platform involves the collection and analysis of feedback on the perceptions of people in different stages of displacement – in the borderlands, transit countries, and countries of final destination.

## Survey development

Ground Truth Solutions designed these focus group discussions to gather feedback from refugees about the provision of humanitarian aid in Northern Iraq. The aim is to help guide international agencies in creating more effective and responsive aid programmes. Focus group discussions are designed to delve deeper into some of the issues that surfaced in the first perceptual survey conducted in March 2017.

## Sample size

A total of 49 people participated in the focus group discussions across four locations in Northern Iraq, including two refugee camps (Domiz and Kawergosk) and two urban locations (Dohuk and Erbil).

## Sampling methodology

Focus group discussions were held at the same sites as in the first round of data collection in March 2017, covering two camps as well as two urban areas. Six focus group discussions were conducted; two discussions were held with only female participants, two with only male participants, and two were held among mixed groups. Individuals were selected to participate at random. Enumerators walked through camps and urban areas identifying a homogenous focus group participant body to best yield views and attitudes of the group in each site.

## Language of the survey

The focus group discussions were conducted in Arabic.

## Data collection

Focus group discussions were conducted until all issues had been discussed. There was no need to have uniform agreement on any one topic, and the enumerators encouraged each participant to voice their own thoughts. No incentives were given for participation. There were some challenges during the recruitment of participants, including scepticism surrounding the purpose and use of the data, unwillingness to be recorded, as well as issues of trusting the data collectors. Participation was entirely voluntary and participants were informed of the confidentiality and purpose of the discussions. Data was collected between 24 August and 2 September 2017 by SREO, an independent data collection company contracted by Ground Truth Solutions.

For more information about Ground Truth Solutions surveys in Iraq, please contact [info@groundtruthsolutions.org](mailto:info@groundtruthsolutions.org) or Rebecca Hetzer ([rebecca@groundtruthsolutions.org](mailto:rebecca@groundtruthsolutions.org)).



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